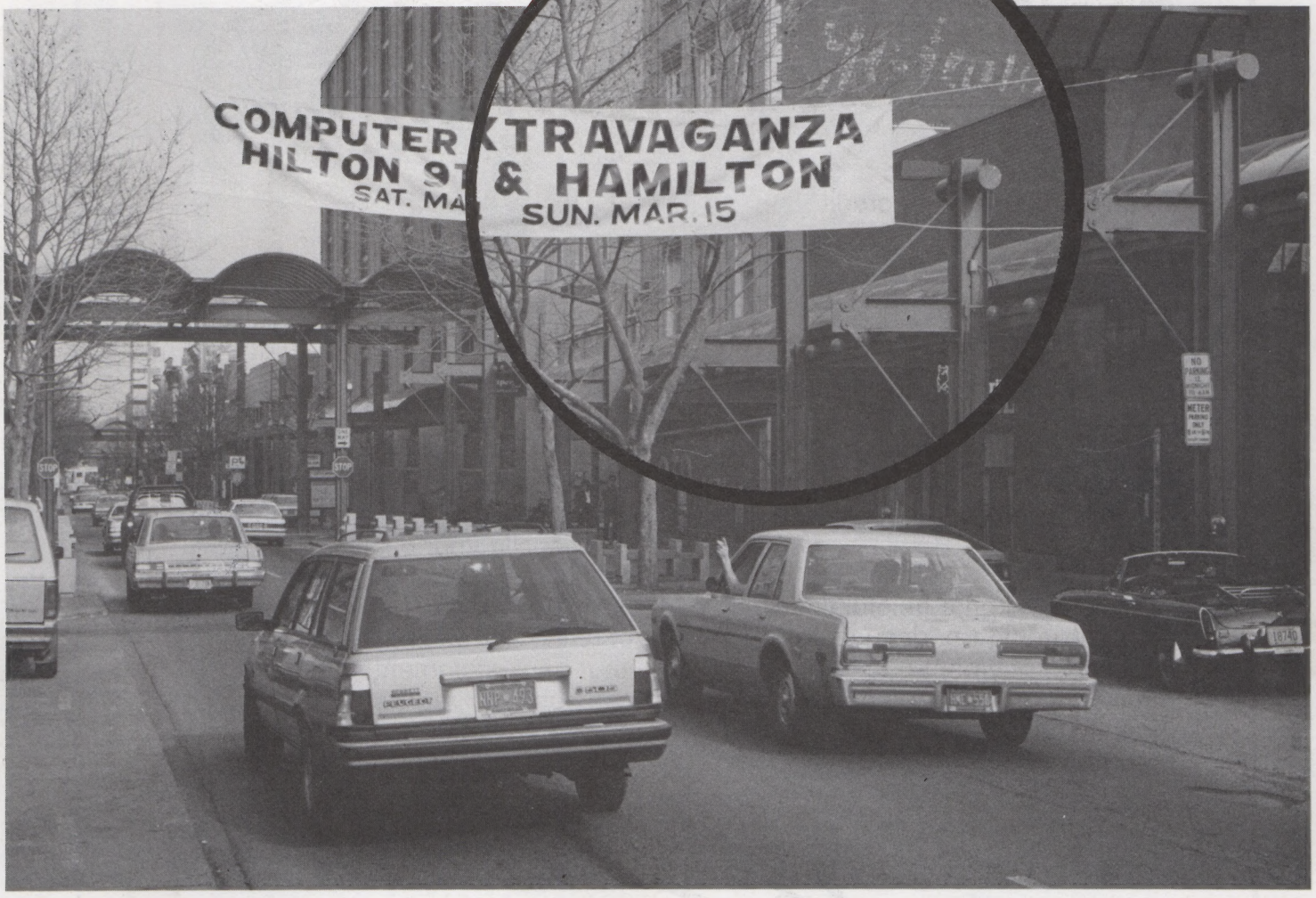
ABE's ACEs - APRIL 1987

EXPO REVIEW

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EXPO



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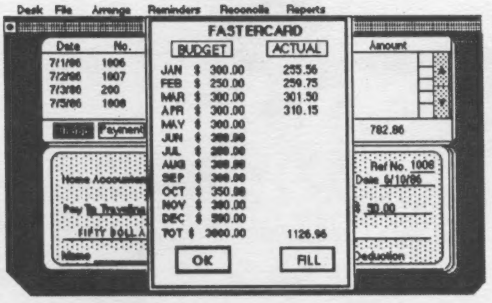

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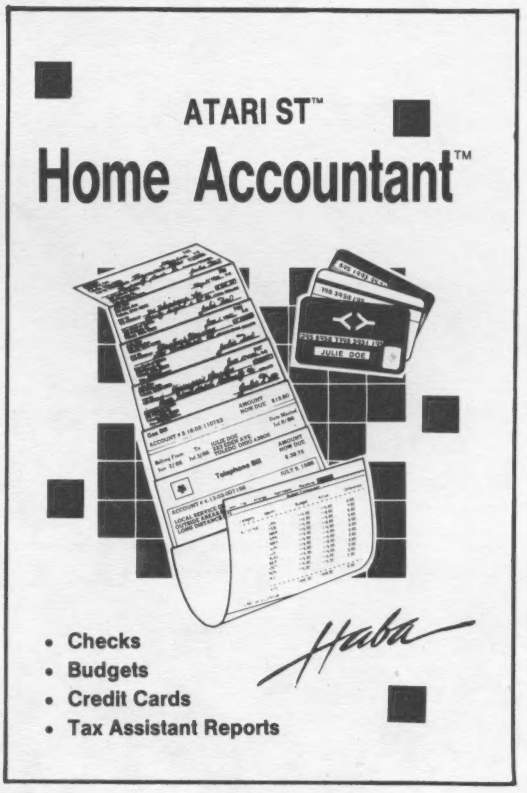

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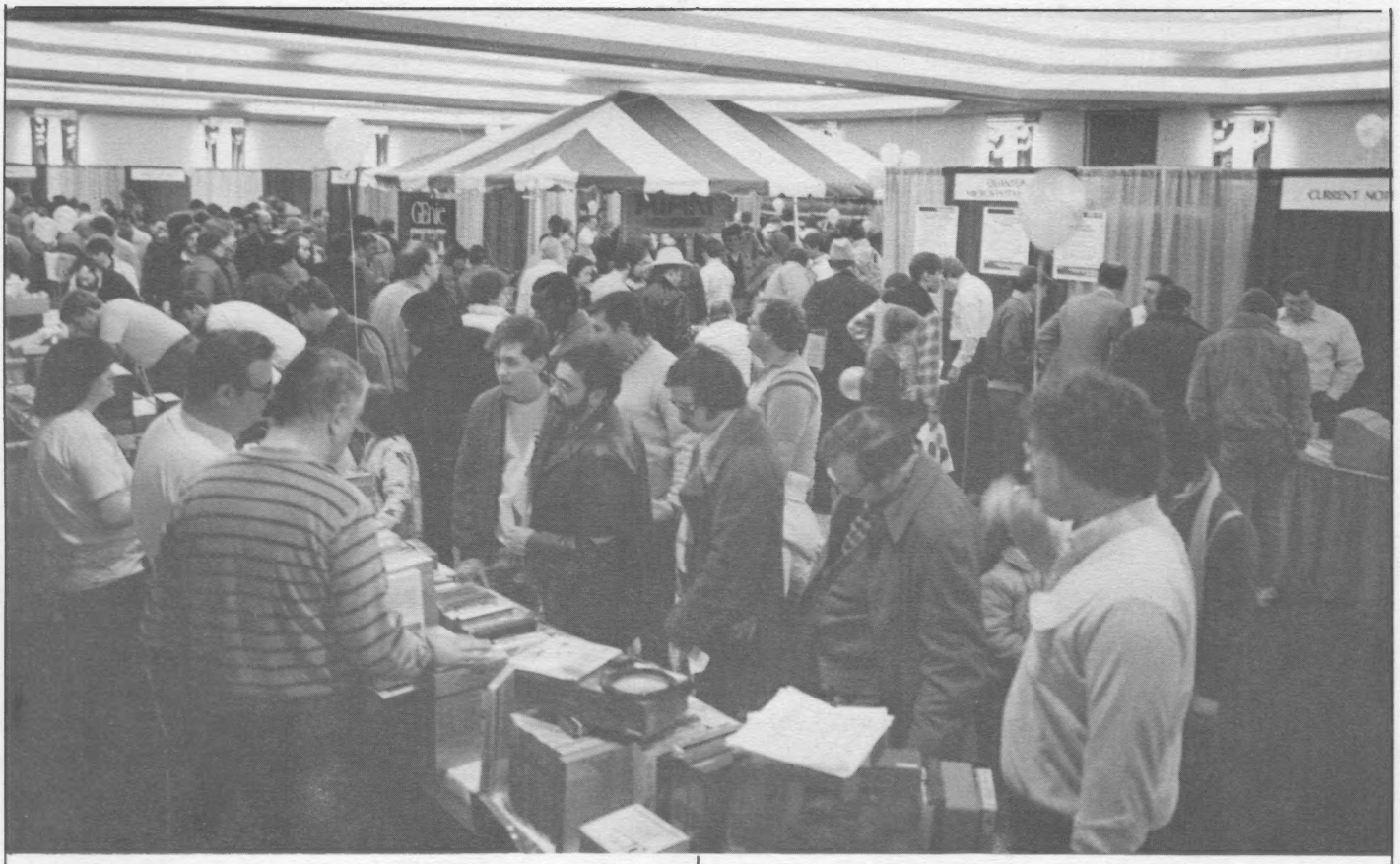


AS THE EXPO TURNS

Most of our club members attended the EXPO and the overwhelming response we've received has been very positive. Those of us who put the show together over the last seven months really appreciate your thanks.

Because just about everyone from the club was at the show, this will not be your standard show report. Instead, I'll attempt to summarize the EXPO and give you a look behind the scenes. It may read a bit like a soap opera, thus the title.

A STEAMY START

Shortly after last June's club elections, then president Thom Geller spoke with Atari Corp. about the possibility of our club, ABE's ACEs, hosting what was then being called an Atari Fair. Atari's response was positive so Thom began looking into possible locations for the event.

For reasons still unknown, none of the other E-board members were included in any planning, or consulted on locations. Instead, we were told the best, and in fact only location available was the Holiday Inn East in Bethlehem.

In a conversation with Thom, I expressed serious reservations about this choice due to limited space. The Holiday Inn had less than 4,000 square feet and, I was told, Atari's minimum requirement was 5,000 square feet. Thom's response was that this was all that we could get and that if we lost the show, we lost it.

Several weeks of inactivity later, all hell broke loose. Sandi Austin had tried to contact Thom about the show. Thom was in the process of moving and Sandi (as well as the rest of the E-board) had not yet been given Thom's new phone number. Sandi contacted vice president Shirley Bickert who, like the rest of us, had not been kept abreast of the latest details.

After this conversation, Shirley took the bull by the horns and contacted all of the area convention centers and, within 24 hours, she had a complete

report on the club BBS in the E-board section for all board members to see. 24 hours later, an updated report with more detailed information was uploaded by Shirley. At the same time, a heated phone conversation between Shirley and Thom took place. The end result was Thom's resignation as president of the club and the start of the new LVAUG.

Thom's resignation brought out the worst elements of our club. All of the "do nothing but bitch" crowd came out of the woodwork. Many of them left the club to join the new group. Most of them didn't even know what was going on. I was glad to see many of them go.

Unfortunately, several active club members, among them Jim Finley and Mike Stoliker, also left the club. This was regrettable and, I'm convinced, due to a combination of personality conflicts, mis-information, and hot tempers (mine included).

Be that as it may, the fact is, without Shirley's intervention, ABE's ACEs would not have hosted the Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo. In fact, I'm certain there would not have been any such EXPO were it not for Shirley. Was it worth all the fuss? In my opinion, yes. Others will have to decide for themselves.

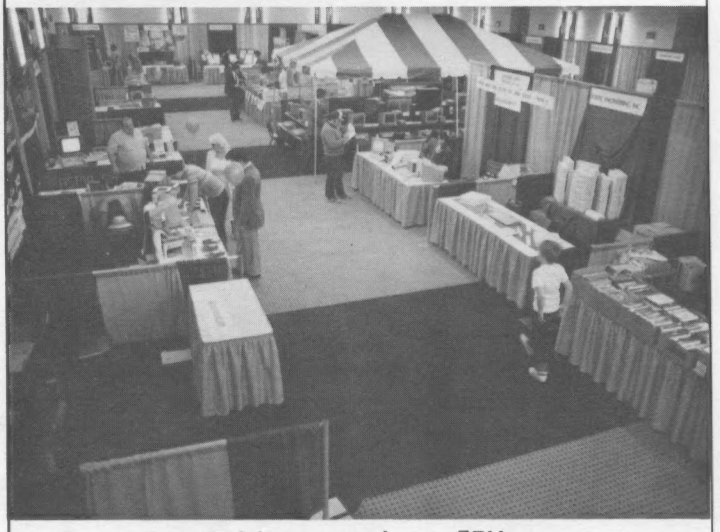
PLANNING

The show took over seven months to plan. The EXPO committee had a meeting at the newly selected EXPO location, the Allentown Hilton, in September of 1986. In November, several of us went to the Pittsburgh show to see one first hand. The second major potential show stopper reared its ugly head at the Pittsburg show.

BLACK LIST BLACK PATCH

Black Patch Systems, notorious for poor mail order service, was at the Pittsburg show. They had five booths filled with the latest Atari goodies at good prices. They were doing a big business and we wanted them for our show. Ralph approached them and things looked very good for them to do our EXPO.

Friday the 13th, 12 noon.
Will this show come together
in less than 24 hours?



Friday evening, 7PM.
The EXPO starts to take shape.

Friday's 8PM cocktail party.
Shirley Bickert, James Craig and
Mayor Daddona talk about the show.

Saturday and Sunday's weather, perfect both days.

Mayor Daddona presents Shirley with a key to the city of Allentown on opening day.

Over 1,100 people purchase tickets on the first day alone!

Atari got wind of this and, in no uncertain terms, let it be known that they did not want Black Patch at our EXPO. If Black Patch came, no door prize from Atari.

After Pittsburg, the EXPO committee regrouped and decided the hell with Atari. We could live with no doorprize. It was more important, we felt, to have a good selection of product at the show at the best possible prices. Ralph continued working on Black Patch and had them agreeing to take five or six booths at the EXPO.

Suddenly we were getting a number of high pressure phone calls from Sandi Austin. What started as "no door prize" escalated to "no new products at the show" and finally to a threat that Atari might not show up at all if we booked Black Patch.

Ralph, who was having a difficult enough time selling show space, found this new obstacle unacceptable and threatened to resign.

TELEGRAM

At Glenn Snyder's suggestion, I sent a telegram to Jack Tramiel. While no mention of the telegram was made directly, there seemed to be a noticable change in Atari's attitude.

MAILGRAM SERVICE CENTER
MIDDLETOWN, VA. 22645
19AM

Western Union Mailgram

4-009472801900Z 01/19/87 ICS IPMMTZZ CSP PHAB
1 2157598151 MGM TDMT NAZARETH PA 01-19 1217P EST

DENNIS JOHN PHOTOGRAPHY D JOHN
4367 CHRISTIAN SPRINGS RD
NAZARETH PA 18064

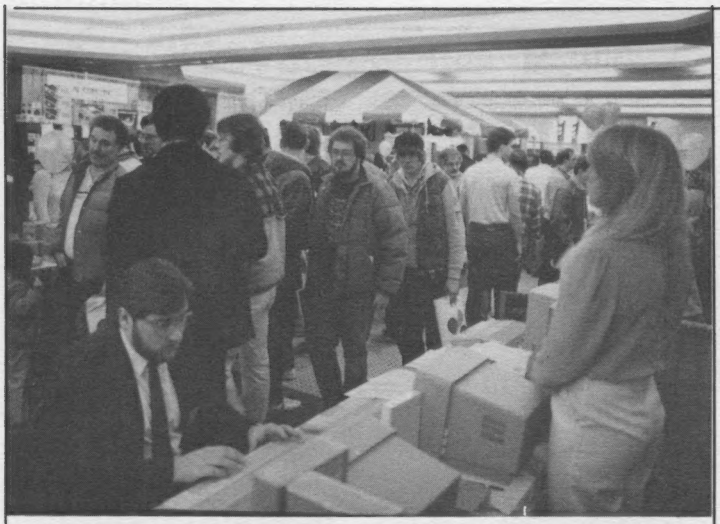
THIS IS A CONFIRMATION COPY OF THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE:

2157598151 TDMT NAZARETH PA 75 01-19 1217P EST
PMS JACK TRAMIEL, DLR
ATARI CORP HPT DLY MGM, DLR
1196 BORREGAS AVE
SUNNYVALE CA 94086

MR TRAMIEL

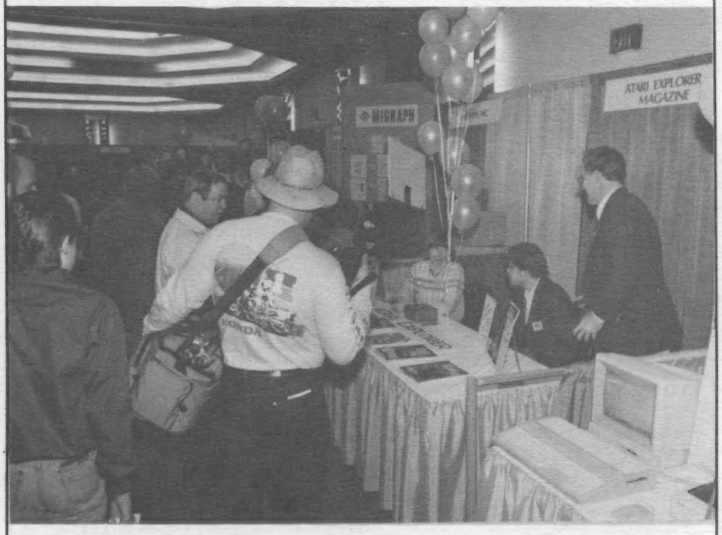
PLEASE HELP BEING ASKED TO ILLEGALLY REFUSE BLACK PATCH BOOTH AT EXPO ATARI THREATS INCLUDE NO DOOR PRIZE, NO NEW PRODUCTS, AND NOW COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EXPO APPEARS MISGUIDED EMPLOYEES CANNOT TELL FRIEND FROM FOE WE ARE ON YOUR SIDE BLACK PATCH WINTS AT COURT INJUNCTION AND/OR DISCRIMINATION SUIT PLEASE CALL OFF THE DOGS CAN WE GET BACK TO WORK ON A GREAT ATARI EXPO ADVISE 215-759-8271 OR 215-759-8151

SINCERELY
DENNIS JOHN
EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA ATARI EXPO



Looking towards Atari's "tent".
Good crowds all day, both days.

Progressive Computer Applications
demos the latest version of
The Graphic Artist.



David Ahl and Besty Staples man the
Atari Explorer booth.
Leon Bonam readys camera gear.

Sandi called Shirley and said that every effort would be made to get the new products to our show. Neil Harris called Ralph to assure him that Atari would do everything in its power to replace those Black Patch Booths with other, non-mailorder dealers. Sam Tramiel sent me a letter, detailing the reasons for the exclusion of Black Patch. The EXPO seemed back on track.

ATARI®

Atari Corporation
1196 Borregas Avenue
Sunnyvale, California 94088-3427
(408) 745-2000

26 January 1987

Dennis John
Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo
4367 Christian Springs Road
Nazareth, PA 18064

Dear Mr. John;

Atari Corp. requires 1040ST dealers to provide service for consumers who buy 1040STs. We request that the companies who sell Atari's products at fairs co-sponsored by Atari Corp. be restricted to authorized Atari Dealers who can provide follow up service in the event that a customer has a problem.

Because Black Patch is a mail order company, and not readily available to provide service, we ask that they not be represented at the Expo.

The distributor for your area, Sal Moffo of Almo Electronics (215-698-4000), will work with you to procure local Atari dealers to rent booth space that would have otherwise been rented by Black Patch. In addition, he will make every effort to insure that the dealers have a wide variety of products available for attendees to purchase.

I am confident that the Atari dealers who participate in the Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo will help to make it the exciting event that you have planned.

Sincerely,

Sam Tramiel

cc: Sal Moffo

THE COMMITTEE

Our EXPO committee consisted of Shirley Bickert as chairperson, Bob Bickert, who was responsible for the set-up of the physical booths and vendor requirements (ie. extra tables, phone lines, etc.) John Slaby as treasurer, Ralph Fenner, charged with booking exhibitors, and myself, responsible for show promotion.

Frank McGrath had been part of the original committee but, due to other commitments, had to bow out. Also, James Craig was asked to arrange for seminars, a task which he executed beautifully, enhancing the EXPO greatly.

The key position here, and the person most responsible for the ultimate success of our EXPO, was Ralph Fenner. Ralph managed to get a great selection of exhibitors to agree to come to the show. He also came up with some really original ideas where others of us would have just given up. For example; ICD couldn't justify sending staff from the west coast for the EXPO. Ralph devised the "phantom vendor" idea.

What if we supplied knowledgeable people to staff the booth? ICD would pay for the space and send equipment and literature. ICD liked the idea and thus, ICD was represented at the EXPO by Jim Finely and Mike Stoliker. That's right, Ralph contacted the two best 8-bit hardware people in this area and they put their differences asside and agreed to do the show.

In addition to booking a great selection of vendors, Ralph was responsible for the super door prizes at the show. The MidiMaze contest prize, a Casio synthesizer and two great pieces of Hybrid Art's software (won by Robbie Brooks from Weaton, MD) was Ralph's work.

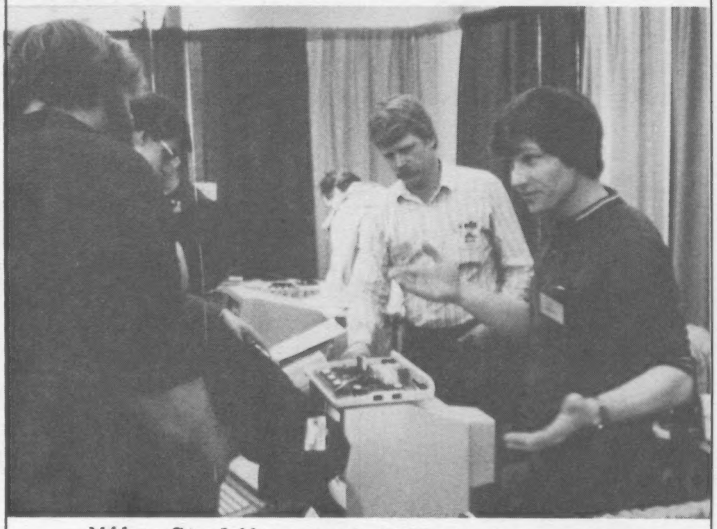
Meanwhile, I contacted Bill Wilkinson and he agreed to be our main speaker at the show. We bought his airline tickets and reserved a room at the Hilton. Jim Craig then worked out the seminar schedule.

Jim also contributed to the show in several ather areas. Jim came up with the idea of putting banners across Hamilton Street in Allentown. He was also responsible for getting Mayor Daddona to make a presentation at the show.

MORE PROBLEMS

As the show dates approached, several things started to unravel. First, it became clear that Atari either couldn't or wouldn't replace the Black Patch booths as promised. Second, we lost some displayers. Games Computers Play went out of business and Virtusonics, as usual, pulled out of the show.

Lee Geissler espouses the virtues of Disk Publication's New Aladdin.



Mike Stoliker and Jim Finley answer hardware questions at the ICD booth (photo by Leon Bonam)

MIDIMaze draws a crowd all day long. At night, the EXPO crew plays a game to 4AM!

I devised a plan to pull an end run on Atari, and get Black Patch at the EXPO. Taking my cue from Atari who, in the early Tramiel days, couldn't afford CES space and thus planned to rent rooms off the show floor, I decided to contact Black Patch. I would tell them about the two empty seminar rooms at the Hilton between the main EXPO and our seminar room. If Black Patch "just happened" to rent one or both of those rooms on the same weekend of our show, who could blame us? What a great picture for the newsletter I thought... Neil Harris with his chin on the floor as he discovered Black Patch in Allentown. In the end, much to my regret, I chickened out and never called them. As it turned out, Atari never booked the promised booths nor did they bring any of the new equipment to the show.

ABE'S WHO?

As you may have gathered by now, this EXPO was the result of seven months of hard, UNPAID, work by a handful of ABE's ACE's members. It came as quite a slap in the face then, when we saw Atari's newspaper ad for the EXPO and heard the first radio spot. ABE's ACEs was not mentioned at all! To add insult to injury, the newspaper ads looked like an Allentown Hilton promo. Most of the members I spoke with never even saw the ad which was buried in the stock section of the Morning Call.

Eastern Pennsylvania
ATARI EXPO
ALLENTOWN HILTON HOTEL

ALLENTOWN HILTON HOTEL

Saturday, March 14, 1987 — 10-6 p.m.
Sunday, March 15, 1987 — 11-5 p.m.

GRAB THE KIDS, THE SPOUSE, AND EVEN THE BOSS AND COME TO THE EXPO.

You'll discover the very latest advances in computers, peripherals, and software for office, home and school. It's maximum technology at its very best!

—ATTEND—
WORKSHOPS, SEMINARS, EXHIBITS
By some of the most innovative companies in the industry.

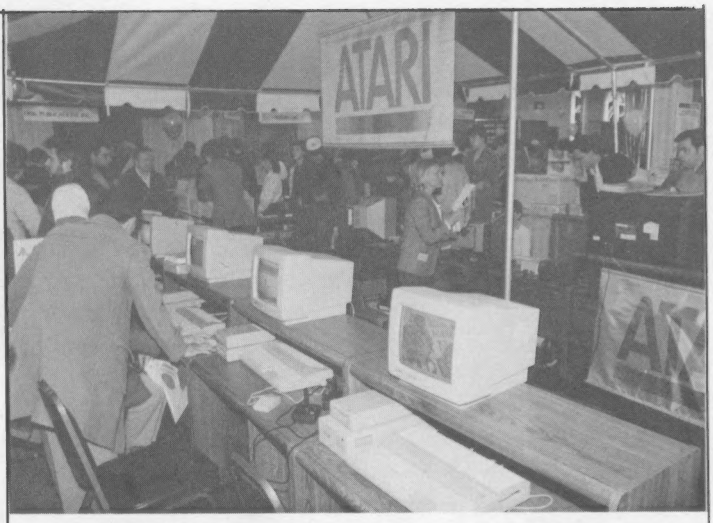
—SEE
• Exciting New Product Introductions

—WIN—
• Door Prizes • Raffles for Products

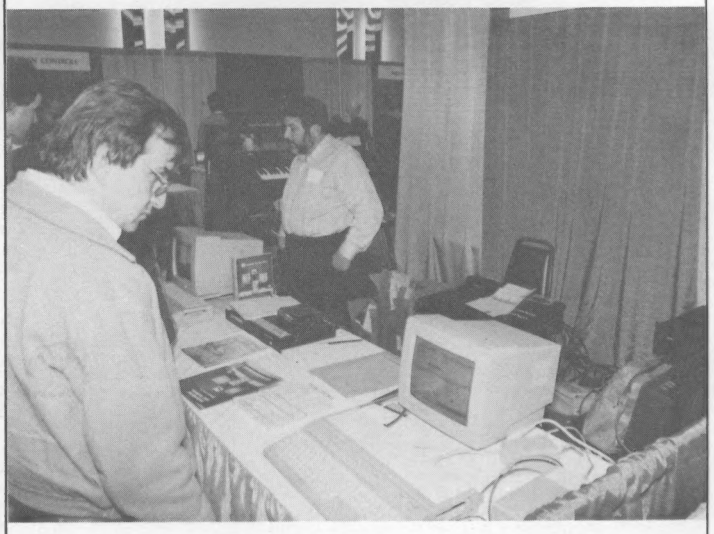
ADMISSION $5
Children under 12 FREE accompanied by an adult.

While at the show, stop by & see...

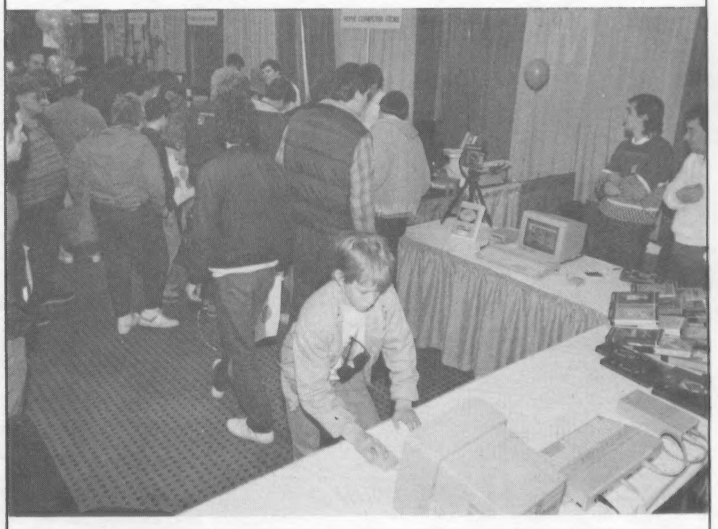
COMPUTERS & GAMES of READING **J&S COMPUTERS of ALBURTIS** **HOME COMPUTER STORE of PHILADELPHIA**



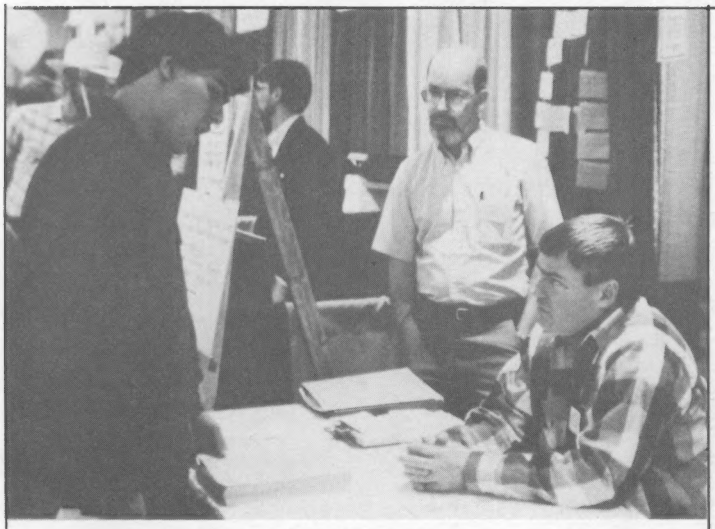
Atari's booth at the center of the EXPO floor.



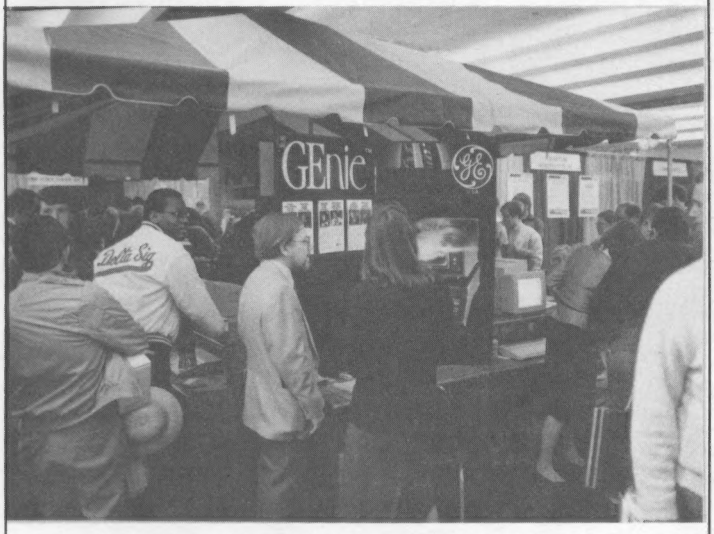
Hybrid Art's booth sounded GREAT!



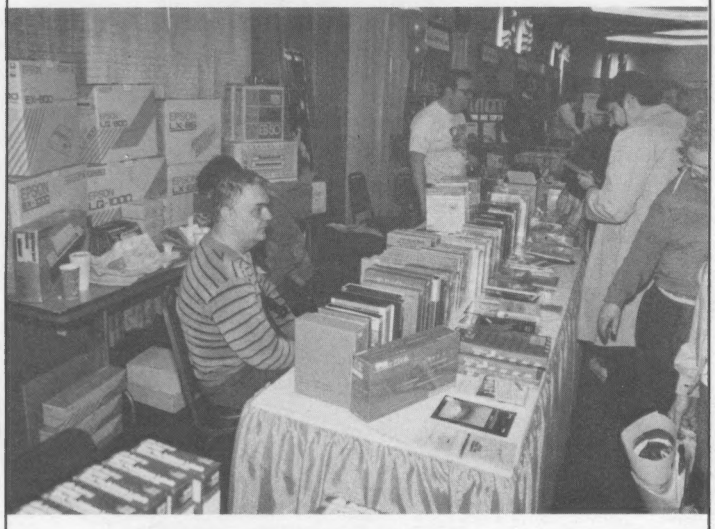
MichTron's Keith Reynolds and Paul Deckard stand by the new Realtizer as a young visitor plays Major Motion.



Harry Davis and Frank McGrath wait semi-patiently as an EXPOee ponders. (photo by Leon Bonam)



Bob Retelle at the GEnie end of Atari's booth.



J & S Computer's double booth. Jim Muller said it was a "great show. We did well over $10,000."

The EXPO committee decided to pull Atari's ad and to run our own. Instead of the three more planned runnings of Atari's small ad, we opted for one full page ad the morning of the first day of the show.

We used the EXPO poster which, we felt, was a much better piece than Atari's feeble attempt to make the show look like a dealer sponsored event. For good measure, I added the line "ABE's ACEs Presents A" to the computer extravaganza header.

AND IN CONCLUSION

All but one of the displayers said the show was great. Just about all of the visitors to the show gave it high marks as well. The main complaint? Nothing new from Atari. I agree.

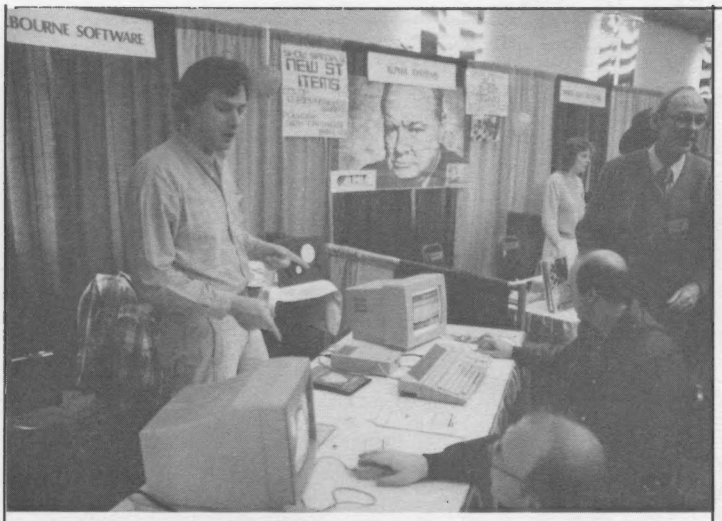
I give Atari high marks for bringing lots of equipment to the show. Also, they were very cooperative with regards to seminars. Mark Jansen in particular, gave very well received talks on both days. (See Jim Craig's report elsewhere in this issue.)

On the other hand, I give Atari a failing grade for general cooperation. They have a bad attitude about these EXPOs. They do not take them seriously, nor do they appreciate the efforts of the individuals and user groups sponsoring the shows. They tried, in vain, to make it look like it was the local Atari dealers(?) who were putting on the show.

I can't speak for the other EXPO committee members, but I will not consider working on any such projects with Atari ever again.

Despite the above, the show was a success. Over sixteen hundred paid admissions, great seminars, super products, outstanding people from a wide range of companies.

Thank you letters have been sent to all the displayers but I'd like to thank a few special people including Shirley and Bob Bickert, Ralph Fenner, John Slaby and James Craig. Also John Douglas and



Shelbourne Software and Alpha Systems were the first two vendors as you entered the main show floor.

Best Electronics laid out quite a spread. Brad Koda tests his peripheral vision.

Sandi Austin, Shirley Bickert and the grand prize winning David Stein clan. (photo by Leon Bonam)

Robert MacGregor who made up all those extra library disks, Fred Hawkins who did the same for the ST library, Lee Geisler, Sharon Klegarth, Leon Bonam and all the club volunteers who helped make the Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo the smash hit we all hoped it would be.

CLUB ELECTIONS

It's that time again. Club elections will take place at our June meeting. Nominations for the club's seven E-board positions will be accepted at the April and May general meetings.

The positions are:

PRESIDENT - Basically, club supervisor and coordinator. Shares responsibility of running the general meetings with the vice president.

VICE PRESIDENT - Primarily responsible for demos, guest speakers, and so on at the general meetings. Fills in for the president if needed.

SECRETARY - Keeps minutes of the E-board meetings. Maintains club equipment list.

TREASURER - Handles all club finances.

LIBRARIAN - Supervises all aspects of the club's libraries. Normally has several assistants helping with various functions such as disk duplication and so on.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR - Produces six issues of the club's newsletter.

We are now coming to the end of the most tumultous year in our club's history. There have been many changes to the E-board since last June's elections and the board members have been weighted down with EXPO duties.

Thanks to the EXPO, the club is in very good financial shape. What's required now is consistancy, in the form of a good group of people, willing to devote some time and effort to addressing the needs of the club.

Can you help by running for office? Contribute to YOUR club!

SEMINAR NOTES

by J.D. Craig

Saturday 11:15 am and Sunday 4 pm
Mark Jansen
Atari's Technical Support Specialist

Mark answers questions by mail, phone, and modem. He's a Contributing Editor of the Atari Explorer magazine, and author of the Question Mark and Inside Atari columns. We felt that Mark was just the person to be our opening and closing speaker, and he provided lots of information and rumor deflation.

Yes, the 8-bit XEP 80 will probably sell for about $80, and a 1200 baud modem for around $99. At this time, the PC clone is only a prototype - no release date is scheduled - but the plan is for full IBM compatability. The next two releases should be the laser printer and then the Mega-ST, with a projected price tag of under $3000 for the pair.

Noting that "Atari is the second most recognized name in the world - next to Coca Cola," Jansen said that he feels that his company can continue to bolster their reputation as a maker of game machines and "serious" computers alike. He also quipped that a certain other company "goes to a great deal of effort to document non-existent features."

The Atari Explorer is finally settling into bi-monthly publication, and should be regarded as the official Atari mouthpiece.

Atari is concerned about customer satisfaction and is working to improve documentation as well as beefing up dealer service. Jansen also noted that Atari now lists 700 companies writing software for Atari computers. On line support can be found on CIS, Genie, and Atari's own BBS.

It should also be noted that Mark claimed to be the big winner in the wee hours' MIDIMaze tourney, which finally

broke up at about 4 am Sunday. Jansen was not the only player with the ailment known as "joystick hand".

Saturday - Noon

ABEs ACEs meeting and remarks by Bill Wilkinson, keynote speaker. Wilkinson is the Vice-President of Optimized Systems Software, author of the Insight - Atari column in COMPUTE!, and was largly responsible for the design of the original Atari DOS and Atari BASIC. Mr. Wilkinson also spoke on Sat. at 4 and 4:45 pm, Sun. at 1 pm, and with the panel at Sat. 3:15 pm. His remarks included these observations:

Wilkinson prefers to use interpreted languages for his own programming, appreciating the ability to test his programs immediately. He asked, excepting "fancy graphics", how much speed was really needed by the home computer user. He noted the similarities in most traditional computer languages - all using algorithms, flow control, and data. Noting that Pascal is the only language used in college boards, he called Pascal "very rigid", and contrasted it with C - "an anarchists's language", due to its lack of "checking". Still, he said that newer versions are "coming toward each other." He stated that ST C's have not adopted ANSI standards, and suggested avoiding Draper Pascal as it was "too incomplete". "None of the C's are atrocious, but none of them are that great," he said, recommending Mark Williams' as the best for ST. Personal Pascal was rated highly, but FIG FORTH was called an outdated standard. He knew of no published documentation for ACTION. Even though he felt it was a difficult language to learn, Bill felt that ADA was a "coming" language, and noted its neat use of operators. Discussing DOSs, Mr. Wilkinson pointed out that with SPARTA there is no recovery procedure for a crashed directory. With DOS 2, recovery is easy, but with SPARTA - "you're dead."

It was estimated that it would cost between $150,000 and $250,000 to develop a good BASIC. OSS was described as being in the "utilities and language business," but noted that they may expand into personal productivity products, such as spreadsheets. Wilkinson felt that there were currently no good data base languages or data base programs for the 8 bit Ataris and noted that there were still lots of opportunities for good 8 and 16 bit programmers.

Addressing himself to future sources of software, Wilkinson showed how difficult it can be to "get rich" in the field. With 8 million IBM clones in use as opposed to 250,000 Ataris, it is easy to guess who'll get software developed for their machine. Profits for a company like OSS are often less than 5% of a package's sale price, and the costs of research and development can be crippling. Documentation can be one of a software publisher's biggest expenses, and post-sale support is also quite costly. Also, games are more profitable than languages or utilities - "There's always a market for a $20 game." Wilkinsons's Rule: Software that costs more than 10% of the hardware generally won't sell. Bill felt that user groups, public domain, and "share-ware" were probably some of the best sources for present and future inexpensive software. "Hone your skills," Bill advised, "Think about doing software," suggesting something that doesn't need support - menu driven with on-screen help. If the product is not too simple and has a decent manual it has a fair chance of making money. Piracy was described as "a form of kleptomania", and Wilkinson wondered what the pirate gained when compared to the time spent cracking code. It was his opinion that hacking anything without good source code was a waste of time. He added that in the long run it would benefit the user to support the companies who produced good software. Antic was called a good source for 8 bit programs.

Saturday - 1 pm
Desktop Publishing

Kevin Mitchell, Art Morgan, Peter Naleszkiewicz, and Dave Staugass (Morgan and Staugass also participated in a panel on Sunday at 2:30 pm. Naleszkiewicz gave a separate presentation on Sunday at 3:15 pm.)

Mitchell is President of Migraph, producer of the Easy-Draw software for the ST. Morgan is a systems engineer in research and development for Atari, was on the original design team for the ST, and is currently involved in the laser printer project. Naleszkiewicz is President of Progressive Computer Applications and designer/programmer of the Graphic Artist software. Staugass, a software engineer who has been with Atari Corp. since it was Atari Inc., has developed video games for the 2600 and is the creator of Neochrome.

This panel discussed some of the methods and tools needed to do quality printing on an amazingly low budget. Differences between dot and object imaging were discussed. Mitchell called desktop publishing an integration of text an graphics. A Supercharger (available by June) will add bit image capability to the Easy-Draw package. Morgan said that after the Atari laser printer was ready, an image scanner would soon follow. Later we may see a FAX modem and an external frame buffer to accept other computers' graphics. Atari is working with Migraph. Graphics capability may be important, but Staugass noted that "85% of what you put out in desktop publishing is text." Mr. Staugass is currently working on a Diablo 630 emulator, among other projects. Naleszkiewicz noted that his Graphic Artist contains, among other things, its own word processor and spread sheet, and is used as an "environment". The system works with 9 or 24 pin Epson or Okidata printers as well as Hewlett-Packard laserjet and plotter. Editors allow flexibility of use.

Saturday - 1:45 pm
The State of Atari - Neil Harris

Mr. Harris is Director of Marketing Communications for Atari, and fielded questions after what seemed to be a reassuring talk to Atari owners and retailers. He is also a "hot" MIDI Maze player.

Saturday - 2:30 pm
Ataris in Education - Bob Bennett

ABEs ACE and Principal of the Dodd Elementary school in Allentown, Mr. Bennett gave an excellent presentation using slides and recorded soundtrack. There are 13,000 students in the Allentown School District, and Ataris are used in the Elementary schools' Computer Awareness program for grades 3-5. Each grade's format for this program specifies Objective, Materials, Procedure, and Enrichment. Also, some remedial reading programs are being successfully used in K-2, aimed at stimulating motivation. (Unfortunately, this program may be in danger due to budget cuts.) Bob pointed out that a good computer course can help teach the student organization.

Saturday - 3:15 pm
Open Panel
John Jainschigg, Dave Staugass,
and Bill Wilkinson.

Jainschigg is the Senior Technical Editor of the Atari Explorer. More questions answered.

Sunday - 1:45 pm
MIDI Demo
Frank Foster, Jeff Fair, James Yee

Foster is President of Hybrid Arts, where Fair is in Charge of Research and Development. Yee is with Xanth. Foster noted that the "ST is becoming a standard in the music industry". Recording artists such as Peter Gabriel and the Pointer Sisters are using them. Yee said that "MIDI is a pretty convenient channel for a multiplayer game", and noted that MIDI Maze was made to be user modifiable. He pointed out that it was not the greatest for networking, because all computers in the chain must be on for the MIDI THRU function to work. One gets the impression that this is only the infancy of MIDI bus use - there is a lot more that can be done with it. Fair, who has programmed for Germaine Jackson, demonstrated CZ Android, showing how both mouse buttons are used to increment and decrement parameters. The "android" is the software combination of "expert technology" with a semi-random function to produce varied, but musically useful sounds. Also discussed were the company's recording, patch library, music scoring, and sampling software.

ASK MS. RUTH

Dear Ms. Ruth,

My 16 year old son doesn't seem to have any social life. Ever since he got his modem, we never see him, and neither does anyone else. He does keep up his schoolwork, but emerges from his room only to wolf down some food. As soon as his homework's done, he goes "on line", often till early in the morning. My husband and I talk to him in the few brief minutes we see him, but he uses all these words like "freaking", "codes", and "handles". We literally can't understand the boy. This goes on constantly, and I'm concerned that he will never have any friends, let alone a family of his own. What can we do?

Exasperated Mom

Dear Mom,

First I have to congratulate you for WANTING to understand your son. There are lots of parents of teen-agers, who would rather not know.

And second, you are probably asking the wrong person. I am one of those people who are addicted to telecommunications. (YES! I, a mature, responsible adult!!)

You say he doesn't have a social life, but that is not exactly true. There is a whole different world of socially active people on line. (But there are few females.) Your son is communicating with many more people in one night, than he could out on a street corner-and he's a lot safer.

Most of these words you don't understand can be easily explained by your son, or anyone else on any Bulletin Board System. If you are really interested in what he is doing, I suggest you ask him to show you how to get online, and get your self a "handle". (this is an alias used by most people on many boards)

However, like in any other activity, there are things going on that should be checked on, and discouraged. Phreaking, is a way of calling long distance phone numbers, and NOT having to pay for them. Different codes are needed for this. Pirating, or getting Copyrighted software from boards, without paying for them, is also very popular. There are many pros and cons on this, but the bottom line is--this is illegal. You should find out what your son is doing on his many calls, and talk to him about your view point.

I really wouldn't worry too much, as long as he keep up his grades, and takes care of any chores you assign him, he will be okay. If he attends computer meetings, and goes to school, he will meet people, and assumedly girls. (which is what you WANT??) I have heard rumors that teen-age boys do not have to be told to go after girls. It is something inside all of them, that worries most parents, until they finally get out on their own.

And finally, computers and modems, can only help him later in life, with whatever field he chooses. The more he learns, the better off he will be. Encourage him, but learn more about it yourself. Who knows, maybe by the time your grandchildren come around, YOU will be the one on-line all the time. (and probably having to explain about it to everyone you know)

Ms. Ruth

COMPUTER QUARTERBACK

an 8-bit review by Joe Souder

Computer Quarterback is a strategy based Football game by SSI (Strategic Simulations Incorporated) for the Atari 8-Bit Computers. The Game makes YOU the head coach, YOU make the team, YOU call all the plays!

Play Field

On the extreme left of the screen, the computer displays the field, with the two names of the teams in the end zones. There are markers and numbers to show where the line of scrimmage and the first down are. When a play is being run, the ball will blink for every yard, and move up or down the field. (Depending whether you are losing or gaining yardage.) In the upper right, is the scoreboard, it displays score, time left, quarter, down, and yards to go. In the lower right, the plays are selected with the joystick or paddle, and the formations are displayed after the plays are selected.

At the main menu, three options are available: One Player Game, Two Player Game, and Team Construction.

Team Construction

This is one of the feature spots of this game, in that it allows you to create a team that you can play in a game. To set up the team, you first type in an 8 letter team name, and then if you want, a three letter prefix that will not be displayed. (to keep out that certain person that you don't want to see or play your team.) The computer then asks how much money you want. It then creates a table that shows Player Type (e.g. Halfback), Money to be paid (e.g. 560), and Skill Percentage (e.g. 110%). The Skill Percentage depends on how much you pay your player above or below the average pay for that player. In this way, you can create either your own team, or create an NFL, College, or High School team based on each player's skill. Example: The Miami Dolphins have an excellent offensive line, the average is 500, maximum is 1000, pay your offensive line 950, and it compares somewhat to the Miami Dolphins offensive line. Some Players Types are Quarterback, Halfback, Fullback, Tight End, Defensive Line, Deep Backs, Kicker, Special Teams, and more. You may now save your team to disk, and play it! Each team takes up only three sectors on the data disk!

One Player Game

In the one player game, the program will ask if you want unique teams, if 'No' is answered, the computer will play a team called the robots, and you will play a team with the name of your choice. The stats are randomly picked. If 'Yes' is answered, you type in the teams you want the computer and yourself to play. You will then have the option of printing out your team's statistics to assist you in play calling. In the one player game, there are 18 offensive plays, including the often used ones, plus a few trick plays like the Flea Flicker. There are 14 defensive plays, a couple against the pass, a couple against the run, and a few in between plays. You choose the plays with the joystick (in port two). The computer also writes a 'Memory File' to the disk, so that it can 'learn' as it plays each game.

Two Player Game

The Two Player Game is basically played the same as the one player game except you may print out the game as it happens (called a 'Game Film'), and you have a lot more plays.

In Both Games

- -You may refuse or take a penalty.
- -On punts and kicks, you can run or fair catch the ball.
- -You may select minutes per quarter.
- -Call time outs.
- -Call all the plays.

In Conclusion

If you always wanted to coach a football team, or just enjoy football, you will enjoy this game very much. As strategy goes, this is the best it comes. Graphics are not the greatest, but then this is a strategy game...

XL/XE FUNCTION KEYS

by Keith Bingaman

Ever write a program with a menu that seemed to be made for the Atari function keys? You've seen them used in many commercial software programs, but how is it done?

Nothing to it, really; just a PEEK at location 53279 decimal (D01F hex). Depending on the key or keys pressed, the result will return a value from zero to seven:

Key	Value
START	6
SELECT	5
OPTION	3
START + SELECT	4
SELECT + OPTION	1
START + OPTION	2
START + SELECT + OPTION	0
(none pressed)	7

The XL/XE HELP key has a separate memory location: 732 decimal (2DC hex). The HELP key is more like a regular key than a function key in that it can be used alone or in combination with SHIFT and CONTROL. Here's what PEEKing 732 returns:

HELP	17
SHIFT + HELP	81
CTRL + HELP	145

The OS resets location 53279 regularly, so it can be left alone. However, location 732 is ignored, so you must POKE it with 0 to clear it.

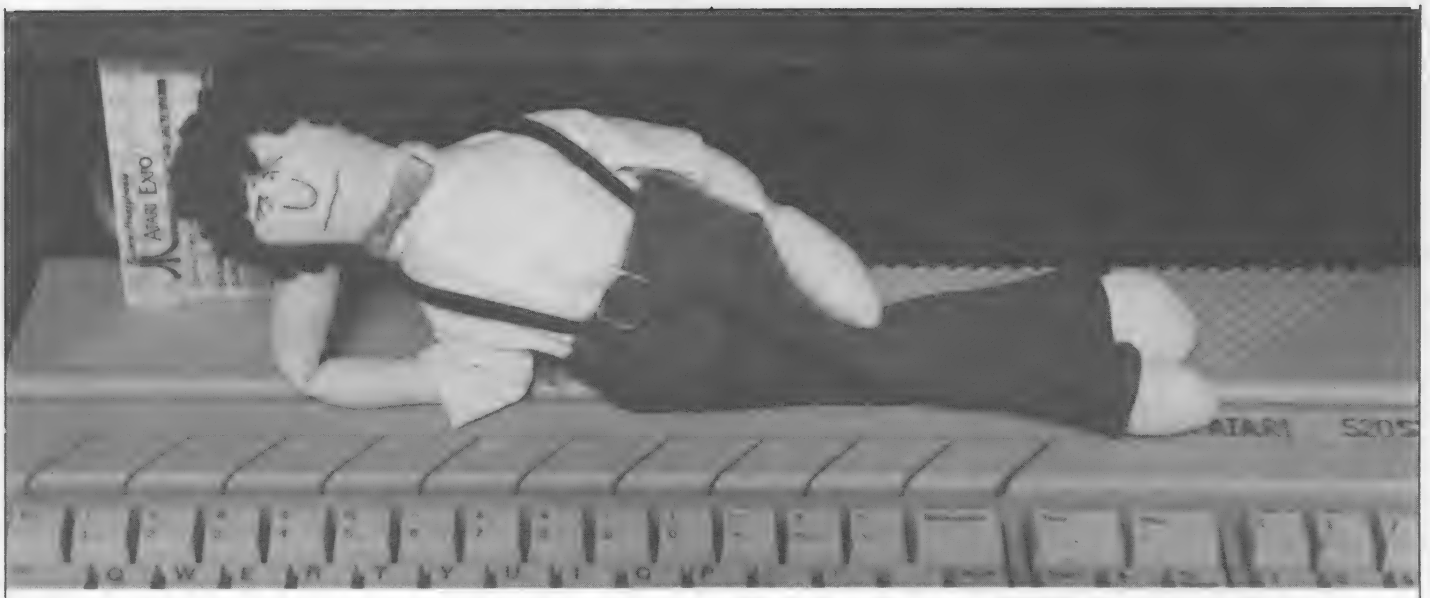
Below is a machine language subroutine that I designed. This routine is called by a deferred VBI (Vertical Blank Interrupt), and goes into page six of RAM (locations 1536 to 1791). The routine checks location 53279 to see if one of the function keys has been pressed. If the START key has been pressed, the BASIC program in memory is run. OPTION lists the program in memory, and SELECT pauses the listing (same as a CTRL-1). I left room in the routine for the START and OPTION commands to be changed (more on that later). Below is a BASIC program that POKEs the routine into memory:

```
10 FOR K=1536 TO 1629:READ M:POKE K,M: NEXT K
20 DATA 8,72,138,72,152,72,173,31,208,201
30 DATA 7,240,72,201,3,208,16,160,0,190
40 DATA 100,6,185,100,6,240,41,145,94,200
50 DATA 76,22,6,201,6,208,16,160,0,190
60 DATA 110,6,185,110,6,240,21,145,94,200
70 DATA 76,42,6,201,5,208,18,169,255,77
80 DATA 255,2,141,255,2,76,75,6,134,93
90 DATA 169,12,141,252,2,162,20,160,255
100 DATA 136,208,253,202,208,248,104,168
110 DATA 104,170,104,40,76,138,194
120 FOR Y=1636 TO 1649:READ Z:POKE Y,Z:NEXT Y
130 DATA 44,14,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,50,53,46,0
```

(This program will appear on the Help Key II, as well as the code, which can be binary loaded from DOS.)

The last data line contains the commands that will be executed when a function key is pressed. The 44 and 14 are for the OPTION key; "L." will appear on the screen when it's pressed. The 50, 53 and 46 ("RUN") are for the START key. When changing commands, use the keyboard values of the characters you want, NOT the ATASCII values (the keyboard values can be found on the third last page of "The ANALOG Pocket Reference Card," first column. If you don't have that, the values 16-25 stand for zero to nine, 33-58 for A to Z). The maximum length of an OPTION key command is 9, because at least one zero must be left between the OPTION and START commands. The START command can fill the rest of page six, just make sure there's a zero at the end of it. Once you have the routine in memory, you must activate it--POKE 548,0 and 549,6. Load another BASIC program and try it out.

Now for the bad news--there is one bug in the routine. VBI's are time-critical, and if you hold down a function key for too long, the timing gets thrown off, and the machine locks up. However, pressing RESET returns control to you, and both the routine and your BASIC program will be intact. The only thing you have to do is re-activate the routine with POKE 548,0 and POKE 549,6. This shouldn't be a problem, because it takes less than half a second to register the keypress.



Every computer needs a gglitch™

This is a story about a rather unique computer product. Not hardware. Not software. Gglitches.

Gglitches are, basically, computer dolls. Small, poseable characters, designed to be on or near your computer system.

Acording to Bill Weiner, President of Creative Products Mfg., Inc, the company responsible for Gglitches, they are an attempt to humanize the often cold computers many of us spend so much time with.

Computer and word processor operators can personalize their equipment with a specific Gglitch and, depending on the pose, the can express a variety of moods.

Gglitch stands for good glitch. The elaborate and creative packaging that each Gglitch comes in, gives a short bio on each of the available characters. Bill Basic, Katie Keystroke, Frank Format, Merlin Megabyte, Millie Modem and M. 'Chip' Cobol each have unique background information, clothes, expressions and so on.

Creative Products is based in Bethlehem, PA. When I went to visit the plant, Bill Weiner showed me some additional Gglitch prototypes. These were for a planned line of computer company licensed models which may or may not see the light of day.

The IBM Gglitch wore a big blue lab coat (what else?) and I saw a Tandy Gglitch. One Gglitch which I'm sure won't be produced, at least not in its present form, is the Apple Gglitch. It bears an uncanny resemblance to a high ranking Apple official who's no longer with the firm. Very laid back west coast cloths as well.

Creative Products donated eight Gglitches as door prizes for our EXPO. With a suggested retail price under $20, and with the exposure Gglitches will be getting on several television shows (including Head Of The Class, Webster, Hunter and others) in the months ahead, I'm sure we'll be seeing them on more and more systems. After all, they're reasonably priced, fun, and unlike almost any other computer product, there is almost no chance that they will be made obsolete by an upgraded version.

THE LITTLE 8 BIT KEYPAD HANDLER

by James D. Craig

A few months ago, ABEs ACEs offered the CX85 numeric keypad along with a disk of software for it. At a later meeting, Harry Davis, Jack Shipman and I were discussing its uses. Another member had promised an ALTERKEY.BAS file to modify one of the handlers currently on the disk. With that file nowhere in sight (as of this writing) I offered to jump into the breach - not by writing another handler, but to try to briefly explain the use of one of the handlers already on the disk. I picked KEYPAD.COM, the smallest file - occupying a mere 2 sectors.

One of the first things that I did was to change the name of that file. Without doing so, some problems could crop up, because another program on the disk gives its customized handlers that same filename. (Not having used the original disk in some time, I don't recall whether or not KEYPAD.COM is just one example of a RUN by one of the handler creating programs.) I've renamed my file KEYPAD0, and will refer to it with that name from here on.

Plug the keypad into joystick port #2. Your computer should be booted up with BASIC installed. (Unfortunately, it doesn't work with TURBO BASIC XL - rats!) Next go to any DOS 2 and binary Load the KEYPAD0 file. You'll be returned to BASIC and be ready to go. The keypad will now act as an extension of the keyboard, complete with repeating characters when a key is held down.

KEYPAD0 uses some of the firmware already in the Atari OS and BASIC packages. If all you want to do is use your machine as a simple calculator, it can be done using the keypad alone with the computer in immediate mode. Type on your keypad as you would any calculator keyboard, and watch the screen to follow what you're doing.

Many of the keypad's keys produce exactly what their markings show, such as the numbers 0 through 9, the decimal point, and the plus and minus keys. But the keys in the leftmost column are arranged thusly: ESC=RETURN, NO=* (multiply), DEL=? (PRINT), and YES=/ (divide). So to divide 99 by 7, type the following sequence of keys: DEL, 9, 9, YES, 7, ESC. This will print "?99/7" on the screen, and the answer "14.1428571" just below it.

Sound confusing? It's really not, once you get used to the placement of the left column keys - from top to bottom: Return, *, ?, and /. One might argue that the placement could be more logical, but it is a workable system that can be easily memorized: It is not hard to get to the point where you don't have to look at the keypad at all. You must also remember how immediate BASIC works. If you just type in 99/7 and RETURN, you'll still get an ERROR message just as if you'd used the full keyboard. Since all immediate calculations must start with a ? and end with a RETURN, your fingers will quickly learn to find the appropriate keys in that left column, as well as in the center block and the rightmost pair (+ and -). A little practice will make you as fast as on any "4 banger" calculator.

For more complex calculations (like those using parentheses, powers of numbers, or SIN), the full keyboard must also be used. The same holds true if you're writing a program. So in these cases, why use the keypad at all? Because, as previously stated, the keypad does have a layout that is easy to learn by touch. If you've acquired speed on the keypad, it will be easier for you to enter any of the symbols it provides than to try to visually hunt them down on the console. As you acquire expertise with the keypad, you'll want to keep it handy, right beside the full keyboard.

KEYPAD0 will survive a SYSTEM RESET as long as no conflicting vectoring is involved. It will also remain operative if you return to DOS from BASIC with the handler installed - you'll find yourself with all the normal DOS functions and the keypad fully operational. However, the keypad will be disabled if you then return to BASIC using option B.

A lot more can be done with the keypad. The disk programs only begin to show some of the possibilities. The keypad is a neat input medium, having less complexity than the full keyboard, but more than the joystick or paddle. If you have further experience with the CX85 and its software, please tell us your story.

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LDW BASIC COMPILER

version 1.0 & 1.1

a 16 bit review by Gary A. Hilbert

..sooo you wanna make desktop-runnable .prg type programs do you?? You want programs that run REAL FAST... WHAT?! and you DO NOT want to learn a new language...hmmmmmmmm.

Sounds like you should look at the only compiled language presently available which uses ST Basic as source code.

Version 1.0 of the Basic Compiler from Logical Design Works, Inc. (San Jose, CA.) will compile MOST St Basic programs into assembly language source code which you then run through the supplied assembler/linker/relocatable module to yield a .prg type program which can be run from the desktop or from an AUTO folder.

After reading the 80 page manual I was left with the strong impression that this language deviates from ST Basic in only a few instances, generally for the purpose of making the finished product more compatible with the Microsoft Basic way of doing things. Generally most plain vanilla ST Basic programs can be compiled/assembled w/o alteration. Some GEM features require minor re-writing and disk file access is also slightly different. I've run into no other problems so far except for trying to compile programs that use variable names spelled like the additional commands made available by the compiler. The areas requiring customization are discussed in the manual , or in the included 7 technical bulletins (6 pages), however the written explanations will be clear only if you understand ST Basic VERY well. Countering this however is a very effective technical support group which unfortunately is not an 800 number.

The program comes on two single sided disks, one of which is protected (key disk method) unless you pay an extra $10...which buys you an unprotected dup

of the one disk. The next version (being finalized) will not be protected and will have a more extensive manual. The compiler is GEM based and very easy to use. After you load the compiler program you can remove the key disk and use your drive A for source code and to receive compiled output. You can also utilize a B drive and/or a ramdisk or a harddisk . You can direct the program to receive input source code from one drive and send output compiled code to another and a list of errors to a third. Sending the list of errors to a disk file is optional since, unlike other compiled basics, the errors list stays available in a separate window until you quit the program. Usually I just load the whole schmere into a 640k ramdisk and all files are read from and printed to the ramdisk, by default. This is a very fast way to compile and assemble but you have to be sure you left enough room since several intermediate files are read to the disk and automatically erased just prior to completion.

The assembler disk includes as68.prg as68init as68symn.dat (developer's kit assembler) a linker (link68.prg) a relocation module (relmod.prg) and several utilities to make life easier. Basically (ouch!) you run the batch file (batch.ttp) and pass it the name of another batch file and the name of your program...wait a while and bang! you're done. The three auxiliary batch files provided allow use on a one drive system, a two drive system , or a hard disk equipped system. The Mark Williams Co. MicroEMACS source code editor is provided including an excellent 127k tutorial which unfortunately is FILLED with IBM style printer codes...lots of _^H's between each letter. (I used 1st word to break it down into smaller pieces and STWriter to globally replace most of the gibberish).

The compiler programs (173k) and assembler programs (223k) will not fit on one single-sided drive, at the same time. My 640k ramdisk holds both nicely and leaves room for my files and output from the compiler/assembler. There is even room for STBasic or STedt or MicroEMACS or STWriter...you can use any depending on your preferences. The compiler does not need line numbers, although I usually use them to preserve compatibility with STBasic.

System equipment recommendations:
(in order of preference)

1. any ST with a hard disk
2. a 1040ST with a good public domain ramdisk
3. any ST with at least one double-sided drive
4. any ST with two single-sided drives
5. (masochists special)
   ---->>> a 520 ST with one single-sided drive.

Option 5 is possible but is probably not superior to sticking with STBasic unless you really have time to spare for disk swapping.

The maximum number of lines allowed in a program is 30,000 (much better than STBasic). Double precision, floating point numbers are implemented through use of a new set of functions which take and return double precision numbers. Fully dynamic arrays are supported with array size limited only by your available memory. It seems like all GEM-VDI calls are supported and most GEM-AES routines as well. The standard runtime operation of CTRL-C CTRL-S and CTRL-Q can be individually left on or turned off.

I really like this program and can highly recommend it to anyone who has need of any of the benefits listed above. I have compiled two programs so far, which are both available on HelpKey II (Loancalc.prg and Numberit.prg). I have also compiled several programs, or portions thereof, written by others. As mentioned earlier, MOST...BUT NOT ALL... ST Basic programs are compilable w/o change.

***** VERSION 1.1 ENHANCEMENTS *****

There were some extremely nice changes made in this revision...

1. no copy protection at all

2. the compiler will now give you binary code (assembler not needed),

or at your option, it will still give you assembly source code. note: the as68 assembler is not included in version 1.1

3. the LDW linker replaces all the SSS LLL OOO WWW stuff from the Atari developers kit....works much faster now.

4. the entire process can now be run from a command DOS processor like Pcommand, or from ldwbatch.ttp (included). The GEM-based compiler option still remains as well.

5. full access to Atari TOS (BIOS, XBIOS, GEMDOS)

6. TIME$ & DATE$ functions

7. a very much improved manual, includes 21 page index and 44 pages of complete VDI and AES subroutines (available on disk for $17.95 if you dont want to type it all in) THIS IS A VERY NICE MANUAL in a 3 ring binder with a hard slip-case cover...veddy veddy IBM-ish. The vers 1.1 manual is much larger & clearer than the vers 1.0 manual.

8. control over current VDI handle (whatever that means) via a new function

9. optional STBasic-like output window... makes using STBasic as source code even easier since output graphics to screen now in identical co-ordinates.

This version works even better on my ramdisk-equipped setup since the compiler now takes only 200k (plus 22k more if you want GEM based compiler) and the linker (& misc utilities) now need 136k. This leaves more room for larger input programs , and misc utilities that I use. If you compile direct to binary (skip the assembler step) then even more room is available since fewer intermediate files are written to disk. To top it all off, the darn thing works much faster...every step of the way. With the reduced space requirements, it is even easier to fit it onto whatever system you own...except it would still be tough on a 520ST with only one single sided drive.

I strongly recommend version 1.1 over 1.0 unless you want to get the Atari developers kit assembler & linker programs (this is of doubtful value since the libraries provided are probably only good with basic...not general purpose assembly language).

This language is for anyone, who like me, has grown comfortable with basic over a span of many years and who wants to make nice, fast, desktop runnable .prg type programs w/o the need to learn C or Pascal.

Don't Forget

May 9th
NOMINATIONS

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SOUND PROGRAMMING

PASSIONATE GLOCKENSPIELS?
by J.D. Craig

Here's still more on some of the free and delightful public domain goodies that are available for downloading from the Help Key II BBS' 8-bit files.

There are all kinds of "demos" to show off the power of Atari's sound and graphics, but PASSION is something special. This is a binary file that can be Loaded from DOS 2 with or without BASIC enabled. It should run well on all 8 bit Ataris.

The title screen informs us that PASSIONATELY was composed by Gary Gilbertson in 1983. It also mentions the Advanced Music Processor v6.2, Copyright 1983 by Philip Price. (I've never seen anyone use Price's processor, so I can't say to what extent Gilbertson's piece was shaped by the processor software. Anyone with further information on these programs is invited to send it to this newsletter or to post it on Help Key II. Full credit will be given.)

The title screen stays up for about 10 seconds, then the piece begins. One small colored bar just sits near the center of the screen, while larger bars cavort on either side. The graphics are obviously not going to be of BOINK caliber, but it doesn't take long to realize that this time, the song's the thing, and that the graphics are following the music.

The noises that begin the tune gradually develop into tones, and interesting changes in the timbre of the notes used is immediately apparent. After a short intro, a melody begins, accompanied by a text and more bouncing bars. (For those who care, it's in the Key of D Major.) The GRAPHICS 1 size lyrics lay over the bars and each syllable is highlighted, changing color at the appropriate time.

The first couple of lines are the single melody with the bouncy bass and noise line established in the intro. Next, a 2nd part joins the lead as a harmony line. The song's "bridge" is just a little out of tune, and I believe that it's deliberate, to heighten the effect of the lyrics. During the course of the 2 minute song, the texture and complexity of what is being heard grows and wanes, and shows the composer's sensitivity to the value of balancing unity and variety, qualities mentioned before in these pages. The graphics also show some variety. In one section of nonsense syllables - "WA BA GA GA, LA DE DA" - the last "DA" grows into "DAAAAAAA", then quickly scoots off the screen's right edge. At about the halfway point, even the previously immobile bar begins to flash on and off in time with a new noise part.

The highlighting technique seems a bit cumbersome, and we reproduce here some text from the binary file: "WHEN we're togeth when WE'RE togeth when we're TOgeth when we're toGETH ER". Those familiar with GRAPHICS mode 1 will recognize the trick of using upper and lower case to change color. But we do wonder why a method more economical of memory wasn't used. Then again, we are unfamiliar with the Price Processor, which may have been a contributing factor to the text storage method.

PASSIONATELY's lyrics concern a love story and the telephone, and the way they're displayed adds to the fun. At the end of the song, a lyric about the phone is appropriately accompanied with a timbre reminiscent of the "touch tone" sound.

Much more could be said about this program, pointing out how it is an excellent model of one way to make a really interesting piece of entertainment with limited means - the POKEY and GTIA chips - but like all good work, it is best experienced as itself. Everyone I've run it for usually wants to hear it a second time. That can't be said for a lot of programs.

GLOCKEN.SPL is a SAVEd BASIC program that should LOAD and RUN on all 8 bits. Authored by Brian Cunningham in 1986, it uses two "high res" voices and a Vertical

Blank Interrupt (VBI) routine. Use of the VBI allows routines to run "invisibly" between every screen refresh cycle. The high resolution voices are created by combining the four oscillators into two pairs that are capable of much finer pitch tuning than usual. Even though the program is in BASIC, a machine language routine is called with A=USR(1536). Two long and complex strings (A$ and B$) are used to set the low and high bytes of the pitches produced, and the author notes that additional notes may be added (or changed?) by modifying these strings.

When RUN, the program shows a brief instruction screen which is erased when any key is pressed. From then on, pressing the bottom three rows of the seven left-side alphabetic keys will produce "chime-like tones". Thus Z-M, A-J, and Q-U produce the natural tones C thru B in three successive octaves. To get the "accidentals", any of these keys may be used along with the SHIFT key, making the tone 1/2 step higher. Thus, to play "C#, D, D#" in the lowest octave, you would press "SHIFT-Z, X, SHIFT-X". The third octave may be completed by using SHIFT-U, producing the B# which is enharmonically identical with a C.

The Atari keyboard allows only one key to be read at a time, but this program gets around that limitation by "ringing" longer than a quick keystroke. Thus, a good two part harmony can be produced by quick alternation between two keys, using a technique not unlike that of a marimba player. One note will continue to ring and fade as the second note is triggered, actually overlapping, not replacing, the first. The SHIFT for sharps may be a bit cumbersome in two voice "marimba" passages, but it works just fine for a solo line. The tuning to standard pitch is excellent, but there is one note (in my copy) badly out of tune: The second C# (SHIFT-A) is almost as high as the following D. We hope that this is a modem-induced error. If not, happy string hunting!

Once again, we recommend both of these programs for your study and use, and wish to thank their authors and contributors for their fine donations.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Where were you on the day of Monday - March 16, 1987? And what were you doing?

I was attempting to recover from an extremely busy weekend. An exciting weekend, one that I had both looked forward to and dreaded for about six months. A weekend when I got to meet people who are experts in their fields. A weekend when I got to eat hotdogs all day (not my favorite gourmet meal), when I got to sit down for only minutes at a time, and when I got a total of six hours sleep. I had people look at me with an expression of "who the H--- is she?" and every time that I turned around either someone was looking for me or I was off trying to find someone who was urgently needed. It was, to say the least, an unusual weekend, one that I am pleased that I was able to be part of.

By now I am sure that you are aware I am talking about the first ever Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo. What a fantastic turnout. We had something of interest available for persons of all levels of computer useage. Through Ralph Fenners diligent efforts we were able to book companies from all over the country, representing all facets of the computer industry. People came from all over the Eastern Seaboard to see what Atari has. Dennis John deserves a big thank you for the turn out of so many people from so many different areas. Dennis was in charge of advertising and contacted Atari User Groups throughout the Northeast. He also made up posters which were distributed throughout the local area. Then there were the banners across Hamilton Street and 7th Street. Where did they come from? Jim Craig came up with that idea. Jim Craig also ran the seminiars during the Expo. Hey, but what about the booths how did they just happen to end up there at the right time in the right places, with the right equipment? That one was taken care of by Bob Bickert, he worked with Holidecor/ C.R.Shows, the Hilton, Bell of PA, to see that all the needs of the vendors and

Atari were taken care of so that the Expo could run smoothly. And run smoothly it did, but not without the help of a lot of volunteers. Where did the volunteers come from, and how did they know were to be when? That was the job of John Slaby. John co-ordinated the "what needs to be done"," with the who is available to do it" lists. This was a job that kept Johns presence in demand throughout the weekend. John also handled the finances for the Expo and kept the rest of the committee aware of how things looked throughout the planning stages.

Through out the Expo we were asked if we had ever done this kind of thing before and how we were able to get everything done. None of us had ever been involved in an effort of this type before. We were not trained to do an Expo. We received some information from Atari, and were able to call Sandi Austin with our problems.

What we found worked best was to let each person on the committee do what they knew best. Who better to handle advertising then someone who is a commerical photographer who works with advertising on a daily basis. And who better to contact vendors than the man who already knew the vendors on a personal basis. We all knew that this man could talk someone in the middle of the desert out of his canteen of water, so he could certainly book a couple of booths. We knew that the man to handle the finances was the man whose computer was already set up with this program and who was using the program to project club finances in the future. Setting up a show of this magnitude included special considerations such as electrical requirements. Well who better to handle electrical problems than someone who installs electrical wiring.

Ok, so what was my role in all of this? Having a background in retail management, I was very comfortable in the role of co-ordinating the efforts of all of the above people. My role was to keep things rolling smoothly, of being the calm one when problems arose. Not always an easy venture considering some of the problems that came up. I have worked some shows (from the exhibitors end), so that I knew some of what we would need to do, and were to get started.

Many thanks go to the people whom I have mentioned for their continued efforts in making our Expo a sucess. Also I want to thank all of the volunteers who helped out with the Expo. Those people who sold or collected tickets, those who distributed posters, who worked a booth, who ran errands, filled balloons, and the dozens of other jobs that needed to be done. Let it be said that when the members of ABEs Aces are asked to help out that they come through.

We had a fantastic Expo, and it was because everyone helped out where they were needed, and did a fantastic job. Thank you for your efforts.

Very truly yours,

Shirley A. Bickert
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TELECOMPUTING

by Doug Boynton
Reprinted from STATUS

Scrunch, squish, squeeze, library, and archive. Oh yeah, tiny and Koala too. What does it all mean?

Well, it's no mystery... and the whole process can save you a buck or two along the way, especially if you're a subscriber to CompuServe or GEnie, or call those out-of-town bulletin boards with any consistency.

They're all ways of making files smaller or more compact. The reasons are fairly simple. It saves the bulletin board System Operator (SysOp) space, and it saves you money if you're paying for the time on the system.

Without getting into the technical aspects of the various methods (I don't understand it anyway), let's try to forge ahead and explain how the methods work and how you should handle these files. Let's call the generic term for these various methods "file compression". It's not always accurate, but it'll do for our purpose.

First, for 8-bit Atari users. The most familiar (and common) example of file compression is the Koala (or Touch-Tablet) picture file. Standard 8-bit Atari graphics 8 screens take up 62 sectors. Never any more, never any less. In the "old days" (say 1982 or so), every major graphic program for the Atari used 62 sector graphic files. Then the Koala Pad came on the scene.

The folks at Island Graphics (designers of the Koala Pad program) came up with a way to put that same information into a smaller file. How much smaller depended on how detailed the picture was. Without going into too much of the technical stuff, it had to do with characters (bytes of data) in the file that are were repeated. Think of it this way. If you were dictating a typewritten page to someone, and the original document contained the line;

File Compression.....Page 42

It would be quicker to say, "File Compression, 7 periods, Page 42", than it would to say, "File Compression, period, period, period, etc.". The philosophy is the same. Using the old system, a totally blank screen would still take the same 62 sectors to save. A Koala compressed file would save the same information in four sectors.

If you use the same technique on a non-picture file, the result is a "squished" 8-bit Atari file. It takes up less room and is more quickly transferred by modem. Of course, once you download the file, it's useless unless you "unsquish" it, and restore it to its original form. This is the difference from Koala files, because the Koala (or Touch Tablet) program does all of this automatically.

"Scrunch" is another 8-bit technique. "Scrunch" doesn't actually compress the file; instead, it combines several (usually related) into a single file. For example, let's say a game program requires a BASIC program file, a couple of graphic files, and a couple of machine language routines. The old method of transferring these files by BBS would require you to download each one individually, and usually rename them to something else. Copious note-taking was required, and if you mis-named a single file, the whole mess wouldn't work right.

"Scrunch" combines all of the files into a single file. Once the file is transferred, it is "unscrunched" onto a blank disk. This method has the added advantage of being able to send those ultra-modified DOS files that were heretofore un-transferable. (It has to do with the three boot sectors, but we won't get into that!)

ST owners: Your equivalents are "squeezed files (compressed or shorter files), and "library" files (many files combined into one.) Becoming more popular, though, for the ST, is a process called "archive" which combines both actions in a single process. In fact, CompuServe is now

asking that all ST files that are uploaded be "archived". Sooner or later, we may reach a standard.

Oh, yes. One more thing for ST owners. The standard ST graphics picture saved by DEGAS or NEOChrome is about 32K long. Your version of the Koala files are called "tiny" files.

So, then, for the 8-bitters, part of your telecomputing arsenal should include "SCRUNCH" and "UNSCRUNCH" (combined in a program called "SCRUNCH2"); and "SQUISH" and "UNSQUISH". I haven't yet seen a combined program for these two.

ST owners should have the files "SQUEEZE.TTP" and "UNSQUEEZ.TTP" (Squeezing and unsqueezing); "LU.TTP" and "DELIB.TTP" (Library and delibrary); and "ARC.TTP", an all-in-one archive program. To view "tiny" picture files, grab a copy of the public domain "TINYVIEW.PRG".

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RALPH'S COLUMN

by Ralph Fenner

As I sit down to write this column, my ST and I have recently celebrated our first year anniversary. In this past year we have seen a new operating system on ROM chips, many generations of new software, new lower pricing, and a heightened interest in the ST. So now after a year of holding my breath, I can let out a long sigh of relief and say that unlike my professional 8-Track recording deck, my ST was an intelligent purchase.

First Things First Dept:

I'd personally like to thank all the Dealers and Manufacturers who believed in us enough to risk 250 dollars for a booth plus travel and lodging expenses to display at the Expo. Special thanks goes to the folks at GEnie for humoring me and waiving the 18 dollar signup fee, also to Casio Corp. for working with me and donating the synthesizer and making the Worlds First Midimaze Tournament possible. Last but certainly not least a big thank you to my friend Gerry (Moose "'o.o'") Humphrey. Thanks for coming out here on the negative financing plan and helping to make it an Expo to remember.

Database Anyone? Dept:

Now for some ST software. Recently two really great databases were released. The first, Zoomracks II. Is, in the words of Tony the Tiger. "GRRRRRREAT!" This updated version of the original program adds full report formatting, and an easier user interface among other things. Zoomracks II is primarily text based, although it can do math (but no true calculated fields). The program is a powerhouse. It can store up to 9 Racks (databases) in memory at a time. The number of Quickcards (records) in each Rack is limited only by memory. Each Quickcard can store up to 27 Fieldscrolls (fields). Each Fieldscroll can be 80 column by 250 lines. That's a lot of information! Because of the program's extreme flexibility (it's a great

letter/word processor). I highly recommend it to all. It makes a great first program for anyone getting an ST.

Personal Note: There was a tremendous amount of information I had to keep track of for the Expo. I had tried many databases. But the one that worked the best was Zoomracks II. I used it for everything including letters, form letters, addressing envelopes, storing & retrieving all Expo information, and creating printed & disk based (ascii text) reports.

Additional Note: My Zoomracks II Expo database and print formats have been turned over to Sandi Austin at Atari. If you are involved with an Expo I would recommend contacting her for copies. They can make an Expo considerably easier to manage. If any additional help is required feel free to contact me personally.

The second program is Data Manager ST from Timeworks. Now you might ask, why, after that glowing recommendation for Zoomracks II. Why would I be interested in Data Manager ST? Well, the answer is that all databases are not created equal. Also they aren't always designed to store the same types of information.

An example is in order. Zoomracks II would have a very tough time keeping track of a monthly sales report for a business (remember, no true calculated fields). This would be no trouble for Data Manager. But Data Manager would choke on a large recipe from the newspaper (can only store 255 characters per field), while Zoomracks II would eat it up. (pun not necessarily intended) So as you can see before buying a database you should know what type of data you'll need to store. (Most home applications would require storing large chunks of text)

This GEM based program is loaded with features. It has multiple level searches and sorts, full math capability, a full set of built in help screens, and an excellent report generator just to list a few. If all that isn't enough. How about a Super Graphics system for creating graphs and charts which alone is worth the purchase price. Also the BEST documentation I've seen from any software manufacturer. I'll sum this all up by saying this program rates a high 10.

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*This is the repayment of funds the club gave the EXPO to get it off the ground. It is not the amount the club made at the EXPO.

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If you would like more information about ABE's ACEs, write us at the club's address or call the club HOTLINE at the number listed on this page.

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